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Out of balance work force could impact future readiness

By Staff Sgt. Cynthia Miller
Headquarters United States Air Force

ROSSLYN, Va. – The current civilian work force is not meeting Air Force needs which could lead to future readiness problems, said Air Force officials at a civilian workshop held here in June.

Top civilian managers discussed force-



The Air Force has developed a three-pronged civilian force-shaping strategy, which includes accession planning, force development and separation management, to address the need sustaining a quality civilian work force. (Photo by Tech. Sgt. Timothy Trager)

shaping strategies and other issues facing the Air Force civilian work force during the three-day workshop.

"Our civilian work force is out of balance. Our acquisition, scientific and technical work force is not being sustained with an adequate influx of new employees with current, state-of-the-art skills," said David Mulgrew, chief of Air Force civilian force management division. "The Air Force needs force-shaping legislation allowing the use of voluntary early retirement authority and voluntary separation incentive pay without position abolishment or reduction in force."

According to Mr. Mulgrew, there has been a 62 percent drop in civilian employees with less than eight years of service in the past 10 years, and 11 percent of all career employees are currently eligible for retirement.

"In five years, more than 45 percent of all civilian employees will be eligible for either optional or early retirement," he said.

Past reductions, made through a combination of loss programs such as early retirement authorities, separation incentive pay and limited hiring practices were not balanced across the civilian work force.

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DOD reviews Bronze Star criteria

WASHINGTON – The Department of Defense has finished its review of the criteria for the Bronze Star Medals awarded by the Air Force and Navy for Operation Allied Force, and determined that both services awarded the medal properly and the recipients met the standards required.

According to Defense Department spokesman Ken Bacon, the Air Force and Navy were well within the boundaries of precedents that had been set in past con-

flicts, including Vietnam, for awarding Bronze Stars.

The issue at hand was whether it was appropriate to issue Bronze Star Medals to troops who didn't actually enter the combat zone but may have been part of a combat team at some distance from the conflict, Mr. Bacon said during a June 29 Pentagon press briefing.

One historical precedent for the medal

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NEWSBYTES

DOD hikes child care fees

WASHINGTON – Fees at military child care facilities will increase by \$1 to \$2 per child each week for the 2000-2001 school year, Defense Department officials announced recently. The fees keep pace with estimates of inflation. DOD family policy officials review and update child care fees annually.

DOD families will pay between \$40 and \$116 per child per week depending on total family income during the upcoming school year.

Installation commanders set fees within DOD ranges, giving them flexibility to adjust fees based on the cost of living in the local area.

SMC wins Air Force award

LOS ANGELES AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. – The Space and Missile Systems Center here has received the Secretary of the Air Force Special Achievement Award.

The SMC exceeded its fiscal 1999 small business goals through education, training and counseling efforts, combined with use of the set-aside program. It also placed specific emphasis on woman-owned small businesses; and Small Business Administration and small, disadvantaged business programs.

AFRC deadline for HYT

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. – Qualified reservists with a high-year-of-tenure date between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2001, have until July 15 to submit requests for two-year enlistment extensions to stay in Air Force Reserve Command.

For more information on HYT extensions, contact a local military personnel flight.



Writing your own performance reports

By Maj. Paul Mejasich
Air Combat Command

Integrity is the first measure of performance. Unfortunately, I have noticed a disturbing trend during the last several years — a form of cheating that should never be tolerated in our profession.

In today's busy world of frequent deployments, joint assignments, complex reporting chains, and busy supervisors, the responsibility of developing, writing and editing performance reports is being irresponsibly delegated to the ratee.

I've heard many justifications and rationales for this practice. Some people believe the environment is too competitive to do otherwise. Others believe their supervisors are unable to adequately develop a good officer or enlisted performance report. In the worst cases, it is the standard operating procedure.

During my career, I've had to directly confront two supervisors on this issue to fulfill their responsibility. I seem to be more frequently confronting peers who develop their own reports.

Air Force instructions state the raters will not have the ratee write any portion of his or her own report. The ratee may

provide the rater input on specific achievements.

In today's Air Force,

**don't do it,
don't tolerate it**

however, many ratees are spending increasing time at their computers crafting their reports with the secret language of performance analysis and promotion recommendation jargon. They are providing near-finished products to their supervisors, which only require minor editing before signature is applied. The opportunity for self-performance analysis has never been made simpler or more advantageous.

Supervisors also have their own justification for this practice. Some loosely interpret the AFI or recognize the practice as just playing the game. Others appreciate the effort and time saved. Some supervisors may be embarrassed to admit they have participated in writing their own reports or tolerated others doing the same.

Rarely, if ever, do peers and supervisors make this issue an integrity concern. Supervisors may assume the written language of the AFI satisfactorily provides for the necessary intervention.

The consequence of this type of abuse is enormous. It will happen more frequently without direct command and peer intervention. On-the-spot peer corrections and integrity calls are needed to solve this problem.

A civilian business acquaintance once told me I should take advantage of writing my own report card if given a chance. Take every advantage possible to get and stay ahead. You are your own best career advocate and manager. For this person, advancement and opportunity were more important than personal integrity.

I see it differently. Bring integrity back to the OPR/EPR process. Integrity, like opportunity, requires active and constant vigilance. Integrity is the first measure of your performance.

Make honor and integrity a way of life and you will take great comfort in their protection of your reputation. Integrity first and always.

(Major Mejasich is assigned to the Air Expeditionary Force Battlelab at Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho.)

Letters to the editor

U.S. Air Force Online News publishes letters based on their appeal to an Air Force-wide audience each week. Send your letter to the U.S. Air Force Online News staff by completing the online form at <http://www.af.mil/newsroom/>

Due to the number of letters, not all letters can be published. Letters may be edited for grammar and length.

Serving country reward enough

In response to "Patriotism becoming extinct" (June 28), it is not the promise of awards, increased pay, or personal gain that make a patriot. It appears we have turned into a "What can the Air Force do for me" organization. Some of us continue to serve, not because we can make a lot of money, get showered with awards, and quick promotions, but because we love the job. ... Focus on doing your job instead of looking for recognition, and maybe just knowing you did everything you could to support your country will be reward enough. If not, perhaps you are in the wrong line of work.

Kenneth B. Adams Jr.
Kelly AFB, Texas

Proud to serve

Service commitment can be looked at through different eyes to obtain a common objective. Most of the topics identified by Lt. Col. Mike Kukulski ("What's your perspective on commitment? June 28) are shared by my active-duty counterparts ... I give up a weekend

a month and at least two weeks a year to serve. I fly commercially, out of my own pocket, to drill weekends in Hawaii from Sacramento. I also take my vacation time away from my family to fulfill my commitment. I am sure there are others who probably do more, but the bottom line is we serve when and where needed. I have loved every bit of my 33 years and hope to do two more.

Senior Master Sgt. Michael C. Retzlaff
McClellan AFB, Calif.

It's not the uniform

Regarding the hoopla about the pros and cons of the Air Force uniform addressed June 14, I joined the service to serve my country and for the guaranteed job and experience I would gain. If people start joining because the uniform looks cool, they are not going to be ready to serve, and they will miss the whole idea behind the military and what it does for the United States and the free world.

Staff Sgt. James Faulkner
Fairchild AFB, Wash.



USO provides 'home away from home'

By Staff Sgt. Pachari Lutke
Headquarters United States Air Force

BALTIMORE — Staff Sergeant William Wallace is literally moving halfway across the world. After completing a tour in Korea, he's now on his way to a new assignment in Germany. During the final leg of his journey, he relaxes in the lounge of the newest and largest USO facility in the world at Baltimore-Washington International Airport.

Two other service members rest in the sleeping room in the back of the USO. The room is dark and quiet, with dimmer lights and recliners for tired travelers to stretch out between flights.

In the children's room, parents watch tele-



vision while their children play. There are also cribs in the corner of the room for drowsy toddlers.

Outside, in the main lounge, military members watch a movie on the 72-inch television to pass the time, often getting up to help themselves to a soda or snack from the USO canteen.

These amenities and more can be found at The USO International Gateway Lounge which provides a welcome respite for military travelers waiting for a flight to their next duty station.

This article is available in its entirety online.

University takes charge of reactor

MCCLELLAN AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. — Authority over the Nuclear Radiation Center here was recently transferred to officials at University of California-Davis. The university plans to use the reactor for research, education and commercial purposes.

Members of the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors teamed with the Air Force, UCD, and the U.S. Department of Energy to keep the 10-year old reactor active as a public resource.

"As McClellan AFB is drawing toward closure, and closing the books on many programs, it is rewarding to be involved in and see a new chapter opening up for UC-Davis and the McClellan nuclear reactor," said Jim Barone, director of the Sacramento Air Logistics Center.

This article is available in its entirety online.

Out of balance work force could impact future readiness

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"We used voluntary early retirement authority and voluntary separation incentives to trim the senior year groups and to minimize involuntary actions such as reductions in force which are so devastating organizationally and individually," Mr. Mulgrew said.

Reductions negatively affected the profile of an increasingly senior civilian work force due to changes in hiring and retention. The drawdown was accomplished, in part, through limiting the number of new hires and offering incentives to junior and senior employees to separate, thus leaving a high percentage of employees who are rapidly approaching retirement eligibility.

The Air Force has developed a three-pronged strategy, which includes accession planning, force development and separation management, to address the need for force shaping and sustaining a quality civilian work force, however, help from Congress in the form of legislation is also desired.

"Better tools in the form of expanded VERA and VSIP are needed to stimulate and manage separations," said James Carlock, Air Force civilian work force shaping program manager.

Congress has responded by introducing legislative initiatives addressing the problem.

An amendment sponsored by Ohio Sen.

George Voinovich, and attached to the National Defense Authorization Act proposes expanding VERA and VSIP, and allowing broader authority for tuition reimbursement.

"Separation incentive pay and early outs are currently authorized for force reduction situations to reduce the number of involuntary separations," Mr. Carlock said. "Expanding these tools will help to balance out the work force by giving incentives to workers in targeted occupational series resulting in vacancies for trainee-level positions.

"This helps us move toward our objective of a balanced civilian force made up of the right mix of entry-, mid- and senior-level employees in our most needed skills," he said.

Allowing broader authority for tuition reimbursement will help the Air Force sustain the knowledge and skills needed in the civilian workforce, Mr. Carlock added.

The Department of Defense work force realignment initiative proposed by Senator Voinovich would be effective Oct. 1 through Sept. 30, 2005. Under his proposal, employees may be offered VSIP up to \$25,000 each in either a lump sum payment or annual equal installments. Under current rules VSIP is offered only in a lump-sum amount.

This article is available in its entirety online.



The Air Force Materiel Command has more than 60,000 civilian employees, many of them work at the command's five air logistics centers. (Photo by Sue Sapp)



Dover tests doggone way to deal with birds

By Staff Sgt. Pachari Lutke
Headquarters United States Air Force

DOVER AIR FORCE BASE, Del. — Early each morning, Dr. Nicholas Carter and his border collie, Shadow, go bird hunting. These days, though, it's slim pickings. The snow geese, once richly abundant in the fields, ponds and golf course around Dover, are now scarce.

What few ducks and other birds the duo come across immediately waddle or swim in the opposite direction, communicating their alarm to the rest of the flock.

Doctor Carter and Shadow are a familiar sight to these birds. At the first long, shrill signal from Dr. Carter's shepherd's whistle, the birds take flight. The signal is not for the birds — it's for Shadow. But the birds now know the drill. Another series of whistles sends Shadow straight for them.

Meet Dover's newest tool in wildlife management. When several methods aimed at controlling Dover's bird population met with limited success, the base became the first to use specially trained border collies.

Master Sgt. Dan Wood, noncommissioned officer in charge of the 436th Airlift Wing Flight Safety office, says the base averages 45-50 bird strikes a year.

"Dover sits, unfortunately, on the eastern shore, which is one of the largest flyways up and down the coast for migratory birds. The major threat we have (here) are the snow and Canada geese. Just the size of them can do major damage to our aircraft," he said. Damage due to encounters between the C-5 Galaxy and the 25-30 pound geese has cost Dover Air Force Base \$1.2 million since 1997.



Shadow, a border collie, awaits a signal from her trainer at Dover Air Force Base, Del. Shadow is part of an ongoing wildlife management program to reduce the number of annual bird strikes.

To help minimize these costly encounters, a three-year contract was awarded in February to Border Collie Rescue, a federal nonprofit organization whose main goal is to rescue abandoned border collies, place them in homes and/or find work for them.

Doctor Carter says the program was started about seven years ago, using the dogs to chase Canada geese off of golf courses along the northeast coast.

"About two or three years ago, we heard about the problems at airports and Air Force bases and decided to shift our attention to work with the bird problems at the airports," he said. "About two years ago, we approached the Air Force, gave them a demonstration, a conference talk and a few other things, and showed them how it works."

This article is available in its entirety online.

DOD reviews Bronze Star criteria

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being awarded to troops outside of a combat zone found during the DOD review was to air teams stationed on Guam during Vietnam, according to the spokesman. However, simply following historical precedent was not the only consideration for DOD's decision to affirm the services' awarding of the medal.

The Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Bernard D. Rostker also looked at the appropriateness of the awards and whether the services adhered to the regulations, Mr. Bacon said.

According to established criteria, the Bronze Star is presented to people who have distinguished themselves by heroic or meritorious service or achievement, not involving participation in aerial flight under any of the following circumstances:

- while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States

- while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force

- while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party.

In approving the Bronze Star Medal for those serving outside the area of hostilities, the Air Force noted that there are no geographical constraints for the medal listed in its executive order or the DOD manual.

Undersecretary Rostker found no reason to change the regulations and that the services' decision to award the Bronze Star Medals was completely appropriate, Mr. Bacon said.



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